MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Soil and Water Conservation Program

Quarterly Update
February 2026

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STAFF UPDATES

Several staffing changes have occurred in the soil and water program since the last Newsletter. Melissa Simmons and Matt Blansett have moved on from the program while Logan Deerfield has shuffled to Matt Blansett's central Missouri area, leaving the northeast and northwest both vacant until recently.

Austin Warren

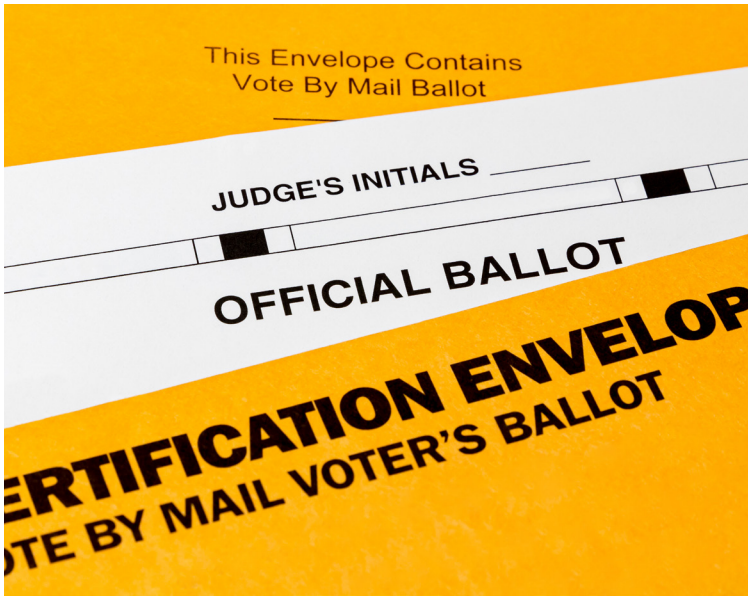
Austin Warren, a native of the Macon area, has taken over Logan's vacant position in northeast Missouri. Austin is a graduate of Truman State University with a degree in Agricultural Sciences and a minor in Agricultural Business. He started his career with the department last April in the Solid Waste Program. In his free time, Austin and his fiancée enjoy tractor pulling and hunting for whitetail deer and turkeys.

Taylor Hauser

Taylor Hauser accepted the soil and water conservation's vacant coordinator position located in the Kansas City Regional Office on Feb. 17. Taylor grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin and has a Bachelor of Science in Business Management degree. She comes to us from Habitat for Humanity. In her free time, she enjoys going hiking with her cat.

BOARD SUPERVISOR ELECTIONS

Districts are in the final stages of the current supervisor election period for areas II and IV this year. The last day to accept votes was Feb. 28, 2026. Ballots are then counted by three designated residents of the soil



and water district to tally the votes during the designated period. Once the votes are tallied, all election judges will need to certify and sign the "Tally Sheet and Election Certification" form found in the appendix of the cost-share handbook, as well as the "List of Voters" form, also located in the cost-share handbook's appendix. Results of the election must be placed in a sealed envelope and presented to the SWCD board. District elections must then be certified during the district's March board meeting. Board members who are not on the current ballot should certify the election. After the election is certified by the board, the newly elected board member is allowed to vote on and make motions on issues relevant to the district. Please note any district that did not have any votes in their election, or who had no candidates, will need to notify their coordinator. Additional information regarding district elections can be located in the District Operations Manual.

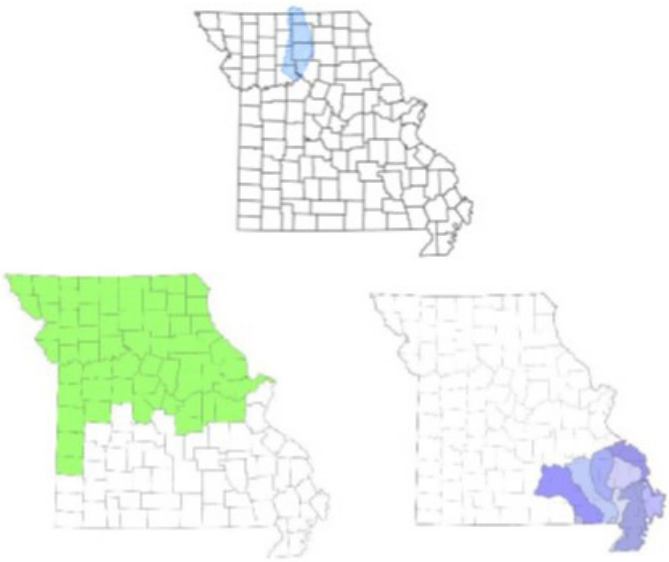
2026 PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Jim Plassmeyer, director of the Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Program since 2022, was honored with the Professional Conservationist of the Year Award for 2026. This award is presented by the Show-Me Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and highlights a person who has made exceptional achievements in practicing and advancing the science and art of soil, water and related natural resource conservation. Congratulations Jim!

Jim Plassmeyer and Tammy Cody

GULF HYPOXIA PROGRAM

The Gulf Hypoxia Program is made possible through an EPA grant. The grant period began January 2025 and runs through December 2029. The total funding available is $1,265,783, there are specific parameters for this funding both in practices available and location. The three areas of interest include the following new or underutilized practices: two-stage ditches, filter strips and blind inlets.



The two-stage ditches will be offered in the Missouri Bootheel and have been allocated $481,913. These are still drainage ditches, but as summarized by Environmental Program Specialist Stacy Breesawitz, "this structure allows the channel to handle low flows while

providing extra capacity for high-flow events, reducing bank erosion, nutrient loading and downstream flooding. Two-stage ditches are utilized in both urban and agricultural areas to manage drainage, as they uniquely control nutrient and sediment runoff while maintaining required drainage capacity."

Filters strips are the next practice that has not been widely used but offers many benefits to landowners. This practice is in the process of being modified to expand and incentivize landowners. Eligible districts will be located in the Lower Grand watershed with an available $177,500. The modified version of the filter strip practice will offer a $3,000 out-of-production incentive with a maintenance life of five years for all planting types. There will be a minimum eligible width of 20 feet and a maxim width of 100 feet.

The blind inlet practice would be a replacement for the Hickenbottom inlets that are traditionally used in terraces with underground outlets. There are studies being conducted by the University of Missouri that indicate moving away from the traditional inlet systems directly helps reduce sediment and phosphorus losses from crop fields because water is forced to pass through a filter material. The installation of blind inlets would be limited to new terrace systems primarily in the northern half of Missouri (north of the Missouri River). A total of $48,820 has been allocated for this practice.

Districts should be on the lookout for additional information about these practices and the benefits that they could provide to Missouri's land and water quality.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT

Article Courtesy of the Bollinger County SWCD Staff

Bollinger County exhibits a diverse range of land uses encompassing cropland, pastureland and hay land, as well as forested and wooded acreage. Each year, the district addresses multiple resource concerns by implementing a wide variety of practices. For row-crop landowners, we offer underground pipes for irrigation, pivot re-nozzle, drop pipes and dry structures, as well as cover crops. Upland farmers receive the most cost-share due to the availability of a broader range of practices, including ponds, dry structures, seeding practices, critical areas, grazing systems, exclusion practices and animal-waste management practices.

Animal waste buildings have become a highly sought-after cost-share practice within the county, offering numerous benefits, particularly during winter months. This substantial investment for landowners is alleviated by the availability of assistance, which helps offset the expense.

Megan Baker, our district technician, has achieved a milestone of 30 years with the district. Beth Eeftink, district manager, has demonstrated dedication with 18 years of service. Bollinger County is fortunate to have employees with such commitment. Due to the increased workload, Bollinger SWCD is now eligible for an additional technician.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SWCD Commission Meeting (Jefferson City): April 1, 2026